



## A goodbye letter

*Dear Grandma,*

I talked to Mom a little while ago. She wants me to give you permission to let go. The hospice nurse made the suggestion. You haven't had anything to eat or drink in a few days, so they've placed you in "crisis care" — which means they are making you as comfortable as possible.

Each of your six grandchildren was asked to call and let you know everything will be OK, that we'll be there to take care of our mothers, your three daughters. You don't need to worry about them anymore. We'll be there to take care of them and one another. That's one of the things you showed us all over the years: the importance of family. You were there for the births of your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and have helped guide each of us from the very day he (or she) entered this world.

I remember when our son Josh was born. You and Mom arrived at the house, and you waited impatiently while Marci was upstairs nursing him. When Marci came down, you swept Josh out of his mother's arms and just stared at him, completely ignoring Marci. We laugh about it now, how absorbed you were in that skinny little baby. That skinny little kid is going to college next year.

It's ironic. At the beginning and end of our lives, we need so much care. We can do so little for ourselves. I'm happy your daughters, my mom and two aunts, all followed you to Florida. You were able to spend so many good years together. I liked hearing stories about "Girls' Night Out" because I knew that meant you were all able to spend time together. And they're there with you, now.



(left to right) My Aunt Aline, Grandmother Sarah, Aunt Sharon, and Mother Gloria.

That gives me hope. As Josh leaves next year and his sister Sammie a few years after that, these are the last few months we'll all be under the same roof as a family. I'm not ready for that. But it gives me hope that some day, despite their grand plans and adventures — if we have been able to instill the sense of family values you passed on to your daughters, who in turn handed them to us — then perhaps we'll all spend more than the occasional holiday together.

And I suppose that was your greatest gift. I don't know how many times my mother told me (and you probably told her), "Wait until you have children of your own. Then you'll understand." ... Now, I do.

After several years as a parent, including a couple of stints as a stay-at-home dad, I tried to ask Mom how I could ever repay her for the hardship and pain (and hopefully a lot of joy, too) of raising me. She said, in essence, do a good job raising your children. That validates what she did to raise hers.

I'm trying. My children are unfinished, and for that matter, so am I. But I think they're on the right path. I have Mom to thank for that, and of course you.

Others might stake their legacies on fame or wealth. But for me, the simple values you instilled in your family are the most valuable gifts you've ever shared. So, it's OK to let go. Let your suffering end. We're here to take care of each other.

Love,  
Danny

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

*The author's grandmother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer a few months ago. She was put on hospice care in February and passed away less than an hour after this article was completed.*